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EDUCATION WEEK

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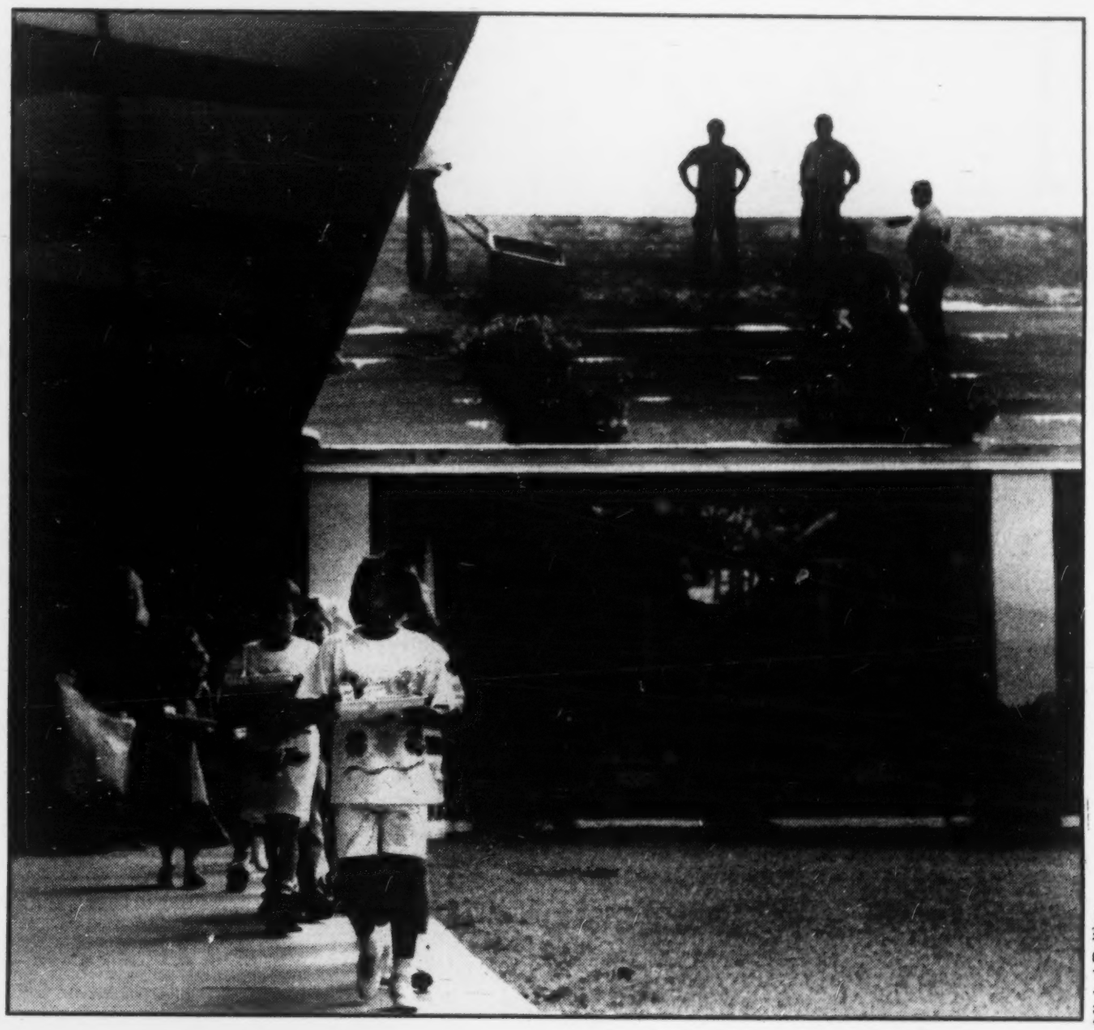
Down But Not Out, Patched Dade Schools Open



Michel Peltier

On opening day, roofers repair hurricane-damaged Coral Reef Elementary School, which is sharing its space with more severely hit Perrine Elementary.

'Consistency' Prized As Recovery Goes On

By Mark Pitsch

MIAMI—Students, parents, teachers, school employees, and Dade County school officials, full of spirit and vigor, stared down adversity last week as they opened schools three weeks after enduring the fury of Hurricane Andrew.

They faced circuitous bus routes; damaged and makeshift facilities; homeless and hungry students, teachers, and employees; doubled-up schools and classrooms; sometimes-frail emotional states; and what will doubtless be a yearlong struggle to regain and maintain normalcy.

But schools in southern Dade County joined their northern-county counterparts and began classes Sept. 14, serving notice that they are down, but not out.

"It's really important for us to move back, because people say, 'Oh, the school's back, it's O.K. for us now,' " said Rosemary Fuller, the principal of Perrine Elementary School.

"I was determined that my kids have some consistency," said Janice Junkin, who flew in with her children from Natchez, Miss., the day before so that the

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Gallup Poll Finds Wide Support for Tuition Vouchers

Backing Represents A Big Shift Since 1991

By Millicent Lawton

WASHINGTON—Seven out of 10 Americans say they would back a government-supported voucher system under which parents could send their children to the public, private, or parochial school of their choice, a Gallup poll released last week indicates.

But the level of support for such a system drops to 61 percent when respondents are told that it would be paid for by using "some of the tax money now going to public schools," found the survey, which was commissioned by the National Catholic Educational Association and released at a press conference here.

The telephone poll of a national sample of 1,239 American adults was conducted by the Gallup Organization between July 3 and July 30. It has a margin of error of 3 percentage points.

"We feel this is really good news," said Frank X. Savage, an executive director of the N.C.E.A., which represents more than

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Ky. Reformers Await Reaction to Results Of Tough New Tests

By Robert Rothman

Members of the Jefferson County, Ky., school board last week received an unusual lesson on the state's landmark reform law.

In addition to conducting their regular duties, the board members, along with everyone attending their meeting, answered questions and performed tasks that were administered to students last spring as part of the state's new assessment system, which was created by the 1990 law.

The purpose of the exercise, according to Robert J. Radosky, the director of research for the Jefferson County school district, was to prepare board members for the results of the assessment, the first part of which was released three days later.

The statewide results showed that very few students at any grade performed at high levels compared with state standards.

The demonstration achieved its desired effect, Mr. Radosky said. Board members recognized that the tasks students were asked to perform were challenging, he said, and that the standards against which they were judged were high.

"It was an awareness session," Mr. Radosky said. "I think we got them aware."

The Jefferson County board meeting was one of a number of events held last week across the state to focus attention on the as-

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Desire for Better Picture of Schools Boosts Statistics Agency's Standing

By Robert Rothman

WASHINGTON—Without stating so explicitly, Congress this summer gave a ringing vote of confidence to the National Center for Education Statistics.

First, in adopting a spending bill for the Education Department, the House in July voted to increase the statistics agency's budget by 33 percent, while at the same time cutting spending for other research programs.

Then, last month, the Senate confirmed the nomination of Emerson J. Elliott, the agency's longtime head, to be the first Presidentially appointed commissioner of education statistics.

Taken together, the two actions suggest that, like researchers and state and local officials, Congress has new-found respect for the statistics agency. Such sentiment contrasts sharply with the prevailing attitude in the mid-1980's, when a scathing report by the National Academy of Sciences urged that the center be abolished if it were not dramatically overhauled.

The agency's turnaround reflects, in part, a conscious effort by Congress and the Education Department to rebuild the center by improving its staff and the quality of its products.

These efforts were prompted by the growing hunger for data about education outcomes. As observers point out, all participants in education debates, regardless of their point of view, need the information the center provides.

"The mood in Congress, in particular, is that this has been an agency that has dependably produced good information," said Gerald E. Sroufe, the director of government and professional liaison for the American Educational Research Association. "They want to support it. They want more information."

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Scuttled Program's Work, Skill Themes Enjoying Resurgence

By Lonnie Harp

The career-education movement, which was banished by the federal government a decade ago as a fad with little political clout, is being revived in a new form by reformers searching for stronger bridges from school to work.

The name has been dropped to avoid the lingering stigma of what many considered at the time to be a failed program. Yet the basic idea of the movement—that career themes should be woven throughout schooling from 1st grade through high school graduation—is making a comeback in federal and state reform reports.

Career-education tenets have recently surfaced in the policy priorities of such organizations as the Council of Chief State School Officers and the U.S. Labor Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills.

Believing that work values and attitudes should be taught as soon and as often as possible, career-education advocates designed programs for every grade and subject, with instruction becoming more sophisticated as students grew older.

In the early grades, such programs introduced basic ideas about workers and their jobs. In middle schools, the content shifted to career exploration, with thinking geared

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Also in the news

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Next fall, New York City parents will be able to choose the public elementary or middle schools their children attend.

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Educators involved in setting national education standards talk about how to set performance levels.

IN SUMMARY

A Failing Grade
A much-touted mathematics and science training academy for Chicago teachers faces the loss of some federal funding unless it changes its ways.
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Back on the Job
Teachers were back on the job in East St. Louis, Ill., and Warwick, R.I., last week, while officials in Detroit were seeking a court order to force teachers back to work there.
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More Teachers in Space?
The head of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration says he hopes to decide soon whether to restart the agency's teacher-in-space program. **Page 9.**

Teenagers and Work
The jobs American teenagers hold outside school can have an "adverse effect on their lives," according to a report by a national advocacy group.
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Unprepared Students
More than half of all public school teachers think at least a quarter of their students are unprepared for grade-level work, a national survey has found.
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A Roaring Success
Kentucky's ambitious effort to establish school-based centers offering support for poor children and families statewide is winning plaudits across the state, a study of the program finds. **Page 17.**

Dropout Data
The first state-by-state report on dropout rates shows that Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, and Nevada have rates far in excess of the national average.
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ACROSS THE NATION

NATIONAL

National Business Group Finds Few H.S. Graduates Ready for First Jobs

High school graduates who do not go on to college do not have the necessary reading, writing, and mathematics skills for entry-level jobs, according to most high school principals and small businesses reponding to a new survey.

The National Alliance of Business surveyed 671 principals and 290 businesses with fewer than 500 workers. The principals generally rated students' skills higher than did the employers, but both groups agreed that graduates are deficient not only in reading, writing, and math, but also in their abilities to listen and to work independently.

About 40 percent of the principals agreed that high school graduates not going to college know enough math to hold an entry-level job. About 27 percent of the principals said that graduates write well enough, and 42 percent said they read well enough to hold jobs.

The employers took a dimmer view: Only 29 percent said that graduates' math skills are adequate, 19 percent said they could write adequately, and 27 percent agreed they could read well enough.

On a positive note, about half of the employers responding to the mailed survey agreed that high school graduates are able to work with others as a team. ■

DISTRICTS

Serious Crime Up 29 Percent in New York City Schools, Report Says

Violent and other serious crimes increased 29 percent in New York City public schools in the 1991-92 school year over the previous year, district officials reported this month.

The sharp increase, reflecting a trend found in many large cities, is the largest in the 30 years authorities in the city have been keeping such records. The increase reflected higher numbers of incidents of weapons possession, assaults, robberies, sex offenses, and possession of drugs.

In response, Chancellor Joseph A. Fernandez said the district would expand its use of metal detectors in the city's high schools. Mr. Fernandez said that 40 high schools will begin using the detectors every day; in the past, 21 schools used them once a week. The chancellor also announced that 20 security coordinators will be assigned to schools to handle all issues relating to school security.

Mr. Fernandez also proposed implementing additional security measures, such as X-ray machines, new police patrols at several schools, and electromagnetic door locks.

■ **Eliot Wigginton, the founder of the Foxfire language-arts program, was indicted on a child-molestation charge last week in Rabun County (Ga.) Superior Court.**

A 4th-grade boy from the Athens, Ga., public schools charged that on an overnight trip to a Foxfire event in May, Mr. Wigginton had undressed him and fondled him.

Mr. Wigginton denied the charge in a statement he issued on Sept. 15.

The nationally known educator and author has been suspended from his teaching duties at the University of Georgia in Athens, where he has been serving as a visiting lecturer in the education department under a three-year contract.

After learning of "allegations of improper behavior" last May, university officials allowed Mr. Wigginton to continue teaching college students during the summer, said Holly Ponder, a university spokeswoman, but barred him from working with K-12 students in the Clarke County district, where he served as a consultant.

In the wake of the initial allegations, the board of the Foxfire Fund, the nonprofit corporation that administers Foxfire's educational and publishing activities, instituted a policy stipulating that two adults must accompany students working on projects outside the classroom. It also commissioned an independent review of its guidelines for the supervision of students participating in Foxfire activities.

In a statement, the fund also noted that Mr. Wigginton had voluntarily taken and passed a polygraph test regarding the allegations.

The Foxfire program grew out of a literary magazine, emphasizing local folklore, that Mr. Wigginton and his high school English students in Rabun Gap first published in 1967.

■ **A high-school student in Amarillo, Tex., has been charged with five counts of aggravated assault, one count of attempted murder, and one count of unlawful possession of a weapon in connection with a shooting in his school this month, according to police officials.**

During the incident at Palo Duro High School on Sept. 11, the 17-year-old allegedly opened fire on students returning from a pep rally.

The student, whose named was withheld, allegedly pulled out a .38 revolver during a fistfight with another student, and then ran down the hallway firing the gun to clear his way. Six students were shot.

Last week, one of the six remained in the hospital, while the others were released, hospital officials said.

The student, along with another who was also carrying a gun, were arrested after a brief chase by police. The second student has not been charged, police officials said.

Classes resumed last week with at least 85 percent of the students in attendance, school officials said.

■ **Fearing voter resistance, the Cleveland school board has backed away from plans to ask for a tax increase in November.**

Without a tax increase, the district is ex-

The Class You've Known for All These Years

The Beatles may have gone in and out of style, but a spoof of their "Sgt. Pepper's" look is guaranteed to raise a smile for an Ohio high school class that graduated 20 years ago . . . this year.

For the Lakewood High School class of 1972's reunion book, Jim O'Bryan, a graphic artist who graduated with the class, superimposed yearbook photos of 150 classmates on the original artwork of the "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band" album cover.

The classmates took the place of the array of people in the original—from Marilyn Monroe to Muhammad Ali—whom the Beatles admired.

"We included greasers, hippies, punks, favorite teachers . . . people from all the different cliques," said Mr. O'Bryan.

Appropriately, the pastel-suited Beatles were replaced by the class president, vice-president, and two valedictorians. Behind the crowd sits the high school, decorated with the unofficial class mascot, the "Keep on Truckin' " character, whose creator, the cartoonist R. Crumb, is a Lakewood native.

The artist even sneaked a self-portrait in the cover; he's in the TV near (what was) George Harrison's foot.

To Mr. O'Bryan and the rest of the reunion committee, the hardest part of the project, which took 170 hours of computer work to create, was choosing which of the 450 students would be part of the takeoff. But their efforts were well rewarded when the spoof received a standing ovation from alumni at the August reunion.

Mr. O'Bryan's plans for the 25-year reunion design?

"I came home from the reunion and finished it in a half an hour," he said wryly. "It's a knockoff of 'The White Album.' "

—S.K.G.

Jim O'Bryan spent 170 hours on his computer to create this spoof of the "Sgt. Pepper" cover for his class reunion.

Tuition Vouchers Gaining Wide Support, Poll Finds

Continued from Page 1

200,000 educators serving 7.6 million students at all levels of Catholic education. "The American people are saying 'yes' to parental choice in education."

Public school groups were less enthusiastic about the findings.

Gwendolyn Gregory, deputy general counsel of the National School Boards Association, said in an interview that while a voucher system may "sound great," it "simply is not a viable notion."

Such plans, she argued, would raise "serious separation-of-church-and-state problems," benefit relatively few children, and drain badly needed funds from public schools.

Shift in Opinion Seen

The poll's finding of strong support for government-financed voucher systems appears to reflect a major shift in opinion from just one year ago.

In 1991, when the Gallup firm asked the same question about vouchers in the annual survey it conducts for the Phi Delta Kappa education honor society, only 50 percent of the respondents said they supported the concept.

But some concern seen about diversion of public school funds.

Sister Catherine T. McNamee, the president of the N.C.E.A., said the change is "startling."

"I think people have become much more familiar with the notion during the past year," she said at the press conference, citing expanded media coverage of the concept and the adoption of some experimental programs.

The Bush Administration claimed some credit for the apparent change in opinion and used the survey results to bolster its case for a federal voucher demonstration program.

In a written statement distributed at the press conference, Secretary of Education Lamar Alexander said the change in opinion was the result of President Bush's "consistent leadership" on the parental-choice issue.

Mr. Alexander challenged Congress to "listen" to the public and enact the Administration's proposed "G.I. bill for children," which would give $1,000 vouchers to low- and middle-income parents in selected cities to pay for tuition in any public or private school they chose.

"Give parents the consumer power to change our schools," Mr. Alexander urged lawmakers.

Government sponsorship of private-school choice programs has been a frequent topic of debate during this year's Presidential election campaign, with Mr. Bush strongly in favor of the idea and his Democratic challenger, Gov. Bill Clinton of Arkansas, strongly opposed.

Sister Catherine said the N.C.E.A. hopes "that both political parties will pay strict attention to what the American people are saying in this poll."

"It should not be just a partisan issue, it should be an American issue," she added.

Support Among Minorities

The poll found high levels of support for vouchers in principle among minority groups.

Eighty-six percent of African-American respondents said they supported vouchers, the highest favorable rating among all groups studied. Support was also expressed by 84 percent of Hispanics.

When asked whether tax money now going to public schools should be used to pay for vouchers, 76 percent of the black respondents said yes, as did 67 percent of the Hispanics.

"The civil-rights issue of the 1990's is quality education for all," Robert J. Kealey, executive director of the N.C.E.A.'s elementary schools department, said at the press conference. "The cry of the African-American community and the Hispanic-American community has become a roar."

The pattern of strong support for vouchers in general, but somewhat less support for plans that would divert revenues from public schools, was apparent among other groups as well. For example:

- Eighty percent of Roman Catholics support vouchers in general; 70 percent support the use of public-school revenues for such plans.
- 78 percent of parents with children in school support the concept, but only 68 percent support the diversion of funds from public schools.

Shifting funds from public schools was also backed by 78 percent of the respondents with children in Catholic or private schools and 73 percent of those between the ages of 18 to 34, but by only 47 percent of those 55 and older.

The poll also produced findings that appear to challenge the argument of school-choice opponents that parents do not have enough information about school alternatives to be able to make wise choices for their children.

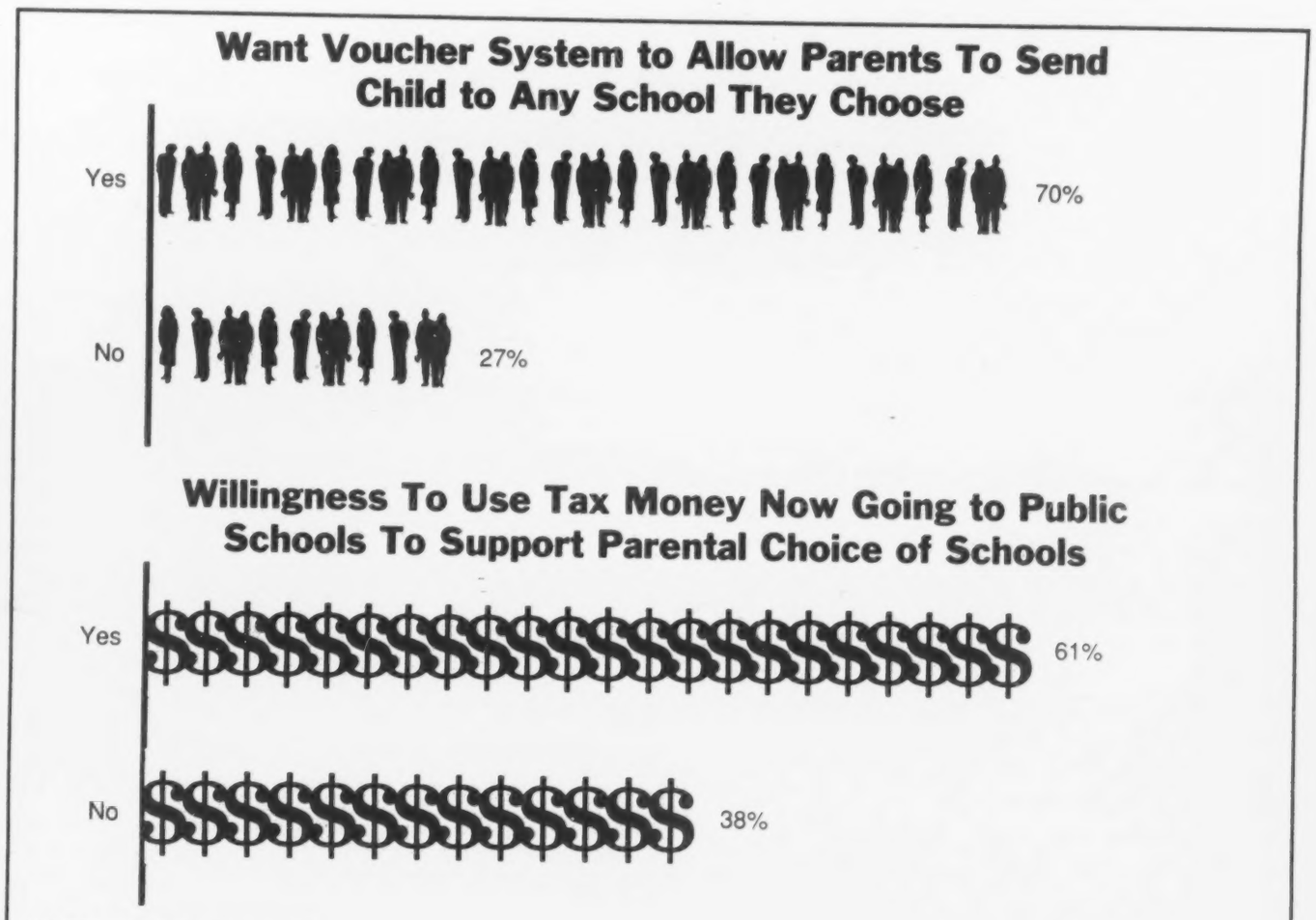
Fifty-three percent of all the respondents to the poll said they had such information, as did 60 percent of those with school-age children and 80 percent of those with children in Catholic or private schools.

The poll also found that 59 percent of the respondents said all families should be eligible for a voucher program if it is supported with tax dollars. Twenty-seven percent said only poor and moderate-income families should be eligible, and 10 percent said only poor families should benefit.

The poll also asked respondents if they would support public funding for choice programs that would benefit church-affiliated schools if the U.S. Superme Court ruled that such programs were constitutional. Sixty-four percent of the general population would favor such a plan, the poll found.

In a similar vein to the annual Phi Delta Kappa poll, the N.C.E.A. survey asked respondents to assign a letter grade to public schools and Catholic schools. Sixty-two percent gave Catholic schools an A or a B but only 24 percent gave public schools such high marks.

Copies of the executive summary of the study, "The People's Poll on Schools and School Choice: A New Gallup Survey," can be obtained from the N.C.E.A., 1077 30th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20007; (202) 337-6232.



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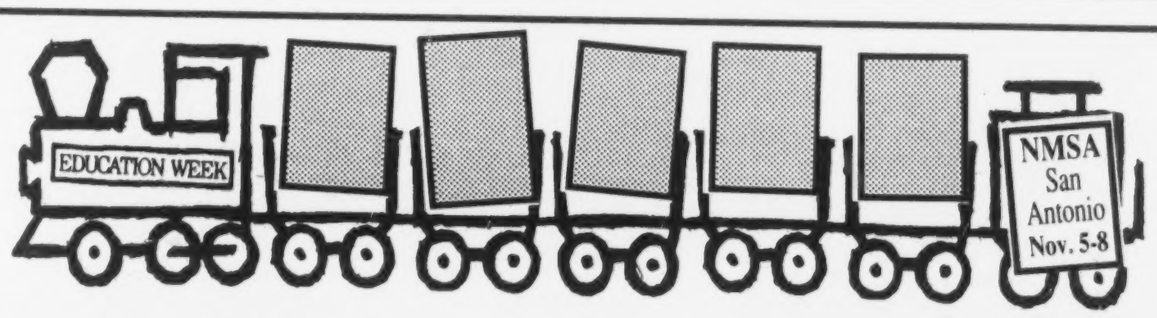

Last Stop: San Antonio!

Conventions in Print is heading for its last stop... at the National Middle School Association convention.

San Antonio is the final stop on our 1992 tour of six of the major education conventions.

If you plan to attend or exhibit at this important convention in American education, you will find Conventions in Print invaluable.

Association Members: We'll tell you about the main speakers at the conference. We'll give you useful information and tips on what to see, where to eat, entertainment, and recreation. And we'll also list the products and services you'll find in the exhibition hall.

If you can't attend, Conventions in Print will at least let you participate vicariously. Nothing beats being there, but if you can't be there, nothing beats Conventions in Print.

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Advertising reservations and copy for the NMSA Conventions in Print, published with the October 21 issue, are due in our offices by October 9.

For more information on dates, rates, or your advertising options in Conventions in Print, call Michael McKenna at 202/686-0800 or 800/346-1834.

For more information on attending or exhibiting at this convention, contact the organization directly.

National Middle School Association
San Antonio, November 5-8, 1992
Annual conference department (attendee information), (614) 848-8211
Betty Wilson (exhibitor information), (614) 848-8211